



# RELIGION AND THE RISE OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN INDIA

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## ABSTRACT

One of the fundamental elements in the colonial conceptualization of India as a “different” society was the fixed belief that the population was a mélange of communities. Religion, particularly the Sanatan Hindu Dharma, in this context, was one of the fundamental elements that came to interpret the Indian society, when European modernity with its full fledged appearance had made it impossible for the Indians to live anymore in an isolated space of history.

With science and rationalism making their way into the land of immense potentiality, holding the hands of the then master race – the British, the idea of an 'imagined potential nation' was also getting entrenched. The flag bearers of indigenous tradition, and morality, notably Raja Rammohan Roy, Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Swami Vivekananda, and other such luminaries tried to combine their revered belief system – Hinduism, with that of western rationality and pragmatism amidst myriad of possibilities.

The present paper seeks to examine how the theoretical foundations for national integration was being laid down in close connection with the Hindu religion and its spiritual assimilation during the nineteenth century, when, for the first time in Indian history, two societies with utterly different fundamental properties and historical tendencies came into contact.

**KEYWORDS:** Nationhood, Hinduism, Spirituality, Rationalism, Orientalism.

## INTRODUCTION:

Indian nationhood construction had been one of the most crucial events of the nineteenth century era. With the onset of Enlightenment and modernity, new ideas, new discoveries, and new way of thinking made their presence felt in an assertive way in the otherwise traditional society of India after the official transfer of power to the Imperial rulers of England in the mid nineteenth century. Subsequently, India with her long established and cherished notions of culture and tradition faced an unprecedented conflict with European modernity.

In spite of this confrontation, India survived. It was a revival of the cultural past based on the Hindu Sanatan Dharma and a reawakening of the once vibrant national culture and national character that saved India at such critical moment of history. The entire process received a new and vigorous impetus at the hands of some of the leading thought-leaders of the then era, notably Raja Rammohan Roy, Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Vivekananda and others. Their efforts, in this regard, stand as one of the most important ones so far as Indian nationhood construction is concerned. In the present paper, their significant role toward India's reawakening as a 'nation' has been undertaken to understand this very phenomenon.

Keeping in mind the then scenario, the above mentioned group of Bengali intelligentsia with their profound sense of knowledge and insight took up the task of national reconstruction and national regeneration to reawaken the otherwise 'lost' national consciousness of the masses.

The idea of Indian nationhood construction has been the subject matter of several scholarly writings (Tapan Raychaudhuri 1988; Partha Chatterjee 1986, 1993, 1997, 1999; Sudipta Kaviraj 2010). However, these writings have attempted to provide a general overview of the said phenomenon mostly from a post-colonial standpoint, by highlighting both the critical aspects of cultural dimensions as well as the political rhetoric of nationhood construction in alignment with the western development.

## METHODOLOGY:

This is essentially a theoretical research which seeks to explore and understand the rise of national consciousness in India in the nineteenth century. For the purpose of doing so, the research has particularly deployed the ethno-symbolist approach propagated by Anthony Smith throughout in analyzing the nationhood construction process in India.

Besides, the research has also undertaken an in depth study of the then socio-cultural history that augmented the process of nationhood construction in India.

For the purpose of conducting this research, we have extensively used books, journals and articles related to the research theme.

The self-images of Indians have been much affected by colonialism over the past

centuries. “The impact of British rule, bourgeoisie economy and modern western culture was felt first in Bengal. For about a century, Bengal's conscious awareness of the changing modern world was more developed than and ahead of the rest of India” (Sarkar, 1970). Throughout the colonial literature, amidst several things, the contact between the West and the East and the resulting effects has remained constant. The superiority of the West was in the materiality of its culture. But culture did not consist only of the material aspect of life. There was the spiritual aspect too, and here the European Enlightenment had little to contribute. In the spiritual aspect of culture, the East was superior – and hence, undominated. It was this cultural domain of superiority that was tied with the national struggle against western political domination. In other words, as rightly pointed out Raychaudhuri, “Modally, the emerging nationalist consciousness adopted the heritage of Hindu culture as the focus of its identity and gloried in the Hindu past” (Raychaudhuri, 1988). Quite naturally, as is well known, the Hindu past is closely linked with the ideals of Sanatan Hindu Dharma – one of the foundational stones of this ancient civilization. A natural and selective veneration for elements in the Hindu tradition formed thereby the cultural bedrock of the emerging nationalist awareness.

Unlike the West, the East has been dominated mostly by the inner structures of the more familiar concept of 'society', where people come to experience a closely knit connection with each other. The traditional joint-family system dominated the entire scenario of the Indian social structure. A kind of personal, immediate and daily relationship existed between the individual and the country, which Tagore characterized as the 'Swadeshi Samaj' – an indigenous and native community. Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, on the other hand, otherwise an utterly conservative, yet a thinker much ahead of his time, upheld the 'society' as the core structure for building up the feeling of 'sameness', 'togetherness' and 'Jatiyobhab' – national feeling or consciousness. According to him, “society is one of the most fundamental elements, which the Buddhists revere as 'Sangha', while the Comteists as 'Humanity'. And it is the Hindu society above all, that is still permanent and firmly entrenched, while those of ancient Egyptian, Persian, Greek and Roman civilizations have withered away” (Mukhopadhyay, (1892) 1957).

Throughout the ages India had sought after spiritual freedom. This aspect became more conspicuous with the British invasion. As Radhakrishnan cogently remarked, “Though the British have been in India for many decades, Indian culture occupies less space in their thoughts and studies. The ordinary Englishman is interested in law and order, in political and economic relations, and is indifferent to the life and thought which alone can bind peoples together. He thinks that he has comprehended India because he has conquered it” (Radhakrishnan, 1940). Therefore, the lacuna on part of the British imperialists to understand the Indian complexity in terms of her spirituality, heterogeneity, toleration and accommodative nature later gave rise to the theory of Orientalism, and the subsequent concept of “the other”. As a reaction against such European 'constructs' as well as the criticism by foreigners resulted in attention being focused on one's Hindu identity and the need to defend it against all assailants, native or foreign.

The West is mostly characterized by its unending urge for industrialism, civic construction of modern citizen and rule of law under the banner of the 'STATE'. Whereas India, has been the central place for upholding ideological premises based on age-old culture, tradition, ritual and similar other practices within the domain of 'SOCIETY'. While the West was busy separating religion and state as two different spheres, India, by virtue of its accommodative nature emphasized upon building a concrete base – which was undoubtedly Hinduism – wherein would rest the entire edifice of nationhood construction.

It is, however, significant that the very first generation of western-educated Bengalis felt attracted to the ideals of national liberation and post-enlightenment rationalism. "Negatively", however, as points out Raychaudhuri, "one dominant drive of European nationalism – colonial expansion and aggressive wars – was universally detested in nineteenth century Bengal. This unqualified rejection co-existed paradoxically with a genuine sense of wonder about the British empire as a marvelous feat, albeit the product of many ruthless wars of aggression" (Raychaudhuri, 1988). As a subsequent response to these developments, rightly argues Partha Chatterjee that, "anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with imperial power. It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the "outside", of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an "inner" domain bearing the "essential" marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture" (Chatterjee, 1992).

In this context, the nineteenth century Indian nationalists' celebration of the 'Aryan India' could be regarded as the "phase of nationalist consciousness" which was constructed upon the spiritual inner realm of the indigenous culture. "It was the era of 'Bhadrolok' moderates, and the idea of an 'independent' India was no where even in the liberal best of the liberal mind of the era, i.e., Rammohan" (Bhattacharyya, 2013). To put it precisely, the moderates by virtue of their erudite learning, conversant both in indigenous and western studies, were more than sure that the same type of European nation building could not be replicated in India. The Europeans who set foot on these continents were Christians, initiated in the creed of loving even their enemies. But that did not stop them from uprooting and exterminating the aboriginals of these places. In contradistinction to this violent process, the Hindu civilization put together an astoundingly huge community that accommodated all types of races and ethnic groups.

Henceforth the immediate process that the then Bengal intelligentsias resorted to was that of "a synthesis" – a synthesis of the best thought of the East and the West. Simultaneously, a deconstruction of "orientalism", i.e. systematic effort of the colonizers of the occident to construct the orient as the inferior, uncultured 'other' who must be under the tutelage of the superior western powers for 'their' benefit" (Bhattacharyya, 2013), was the major task Rammohan, Bhudev, Bankim, Tagore, Vivekananda engaged themselves with. Culturally, thus, they yearned for a return to the past ethnic and cultural heritage and politically wished for the assimilation of the vast diversities under a centralized homogenous authority.

It was amidst such turbulent times, that the then intelligentsias of the nineteenth century Bengal in particular, and India in general, sought to confront the continual European assault that Indians by nature are timid, weak and effeminate-like. Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, for instance, drew excerpts from the Sastras to point out that the present characteristics of the Bharatbarshiyas developed out of a long established tradition, where the emphasis had always been to seek the well-being of others by remaining unattached to the consequences. This is what forms the crux of the eternal Sanatan Dharma, of which Bhudev's stress upon the strict adherence to Brahminical customs and following of the ritualistic practices only served the purpose of an outer layering which he believed if maintained with utmost sincerity and devotion, the external assaults will become tolerant enough to rise above the present chaotic environment.

It was in this connection, that Bhudev brought forth the idea of homeland or fatherland, while arguing his case of Jatiyobhab. The love for one's fatherland and the love for one's nation might appear similar, but there is a subtle difference. "Literally, patriotism is 'love of the country', and according to many traditional defenders of the ideal "it is a higher feeling than that of obligation to the sovereign", and one that the sovereign may himself nourish" (Mukhopadhyay, 2010). According to Scruton, patriotism stands for "an attempt to find political obligation in purely social allegiances", while nationalism is "an attempt to conceive of the sentiment on the model of love from child to parent" (Scruton cited in Mukhopadhyay, 2010).

It becomes clear from the above that while patriotism essentially deals with the political aspect of one's feeling towards the territorial landscape called country, nationalism illustrates a wide perspective by dealing with the emotions, by showing the love toward the largest felt descent group. Besides, the 'civic nationalism', which modernists prefer and which is really only patriotism, is indeed a 'rational' kind of loyalty and can be rationally explained, argues Connor; but 'ethno-

nationalism', which is the only nationalism, can never be rationally explained. It can only be analysed – and invoked (Connor cited in Smith, 2001). Connor further argues, that nationalist leaders appeal directly to the sense of shared blood. For Walker Connor, "the nation is "a group of people who believe that they are ancestrally related"; the nation is ultimately based on felt kinship ties; its essence is a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it from everyone else, in the subconscious conviction of its members" (Connor cited in Smith, 2001).

The essence of this very 'felt kinship ties', in context of India, lies in the Sanatan Hindu Dharma – the religion of universal toleration – that has since the ages been able to join the discreet people together under a single whole, called Bharatbarsha. It would be pertinent to note here that though the hold of traditional Hindu practice on the lives of all but a few among the Bengali Hindu Intelligentsia was still very strong in the second half of nineteenth century, none invoked Hindu fundamentalism as is often claimed. Instead, almost all the luminaries spoke about a synthesis – a binding force that will bring everyone under the same roof. And this could not be achieved by anything else, but Hinduism, since history is ample enough to prove that how it has tolerated innumerable invasions from time to time and has never fallen apart or scattered into pieces.

In fact, the most intriguing aspect of the nineteenth century national awakening is the fact that out of the propagators of the Hindu Dharma itself, the critical and rational reformers, or it would be better to say the cultural revivalists, came forward and got engaged in the daily toil of advancing the backward conditions of the fellow natives with an unfaltering vision of their bright modern future. This is indicative of two important facts: one, that Hinduism was not without its faults; and second, unlike the traditionalists or Hindu chauvinists, like Sasadhar Tarkachudamani and Krishnabihari Sen, for instance, who strongly projected the Hindu superiority and the unacceptability of the western civilization, the nineteenth century Bengal intelligentsia were not contented with the status quo, and thereby desired ardently to bring forth an imagined Bharatbarsha. To follow Hans Kohn, this could be described as "cultural nationalism", where "being entirely aware of the social and political backwardness of their culture compared with the West, nationalists created a visionary nation based on ancient historical memories and unique cultural attributes, and they asserted against rationalist citizenship ideals of the West, the superior mystical organic bond between peasant, land and community" (Kohn, 1944).

Taking a cue from the above, it could be argued, that while Rammohan Roy was throughout concerned about the stagnant, degraded and corrupt state into which the native society had fallen, it was his deep love for the people which sought their all-round regeneration that lead him toward a critical appreciation of the value of modern Western culture and the ancient wisdom of the East alike, and his untiring many-sided efforts in fighting for improving the conditions around him. As Sarkar pointed out, "Rammohan, since his childhood, objected and resisted any sort of irrational orthodoxy. In his *Gift to Monotheists*, he argued that the natural tendency in all religions was towards monotheism, but unfortunately people have always emphasized their special, peculiar creeds, forms of worship and practices which tend to separate one religion from another" (Sarkar, 1970).

Later on, his fight against priestcraft, the oppressive and inhuman practice of Sati, the foundation of Atmiya Sabha in 1815 and Brahma Movement in 1823, his vindication of the ancient Hindu Shastras and his lifelong struggle to achieve monotheism, shows his arduous efforts in doing away with the evils that were plaguing the Hindu society from within. Subsequently, "With the aim of preventing the current perversions of the ancient Hindu religion, which his learned and thoughtful contemporaries tolerated in their contempt and pity for the ignorant multitude, he published between 1815 and 1817 the Bengali translation of the authoritative Vedanta together with an abridgement and also translated five of the principal Upanishads, to demonstrate to the general public that the Hindu scriptures themselves preached monotheism" (Sarkar, 1970).

Rammohan's stern reaction against the vulgar religion of superstitious idol worship for the masses and the non-translations of the scriptures into the vernacular are well known facts. The publication of the scriptures in vernacular languages and translations of the Upanishads, which was exclusively dominated so far by the educated elite, i.e. the orthodox Brahmins, the emergence of "print media" took place in the most visible form under the initiative of Rammohan Roy. This could very well be regarded as the cultural pre-requisites for the emergence of nationalism via the interpretation of religious principles in a new light using different modes, quoting Anderson which could be termed as "literacy, mass education and print capitalism". "It is 'print capitalism', according to Anderson, which provides the new institutional space for the development of the modern 'national language'" (1983) and subsequently, nationalism.

Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, another stalwart of the nineteenth century national awakening, was strongly rationalist and firmly committed to the methods of 'science', and thought of himself as a positivist; he was strongly influenced by Comte, John Stuart Mill, and later Herbert Spencer. In the particular context of a colonial country, the question that perturbed Bankimchandra was, why has India been a subject nation for such a long time? For Bankim, the obvious answer was – Indians lack physical strength and courage, because, as the Europeans always allege, the 'Hindoos' are 'effeminate' (Chatterjee, 1986). The second rea-

son for the subjection of India is because of the lack of solidarity in Hindu society.

Bankim uses the rationalist critique of Christianity to demolish the claims of European religion as a suitable moral philosophy of man living in a modern scientific age and, by implication, to expose the irrationality of reformist attempts to 'Christianize' in some form or other the popular religious practices and beliefs in Indian society. Partha Chatterjee points out, "In the 1884 tract entitled 'The Theory of Religion', Bankim had set out the concept of Anushilana or practice. Anushilana, to him, was a 'system of culture', more complete and more perfect than the western concept of culture. It is based on the concept of bhakti which, in turn, implied the unity of knowledge and duty. There were three kinds of knowledge – knowledge of the world, of the self and of God. Knowledge of the world consisted of mathematics, astronomy, physics and chemistry, and these one would have to learn from the west. Knowledge of the self meant biology and sociology, and these too one would have to learn from the West. Finally knowledge of God, and in this field the Hindu Shastras contained the greatest human achievements – the Upanisad, the Darsana, the Purana, the Itihasa, but principally the Gita" (Chatterjee, 1986).

Religion, in this context, might prove to be the pedestal bearing upon which one could reach the zenith of discipline, and achieve endurance up to the optimum level. In the words of Radhakrishnan, "The real quality of religion is brought out by our incessant search, unceasing quest, for knowing the truth of things and for increasing the objects of compassion we have in this world. Intensity of search and extension of objects to which we apply love, these constitute the two sides of a truly spiritual man. We must always keep up this pursuit of truth until we are able to discover it, see it face to face. And whatever it may be, every human individual has got the same impulse in him and so deserves our love, our consideration. Society, all civilization, has been one persistent effort to live in harmony with other beings. We maintain this effort. We go on trying until the whole world becomes our own family; our kingdom" (Radhakrishnan, 2009). He also pointed out that "The Hindu scriptures, the Vedas register the experiences of the seers who grappled with the fundamental reality. The claim of the Vedas rests on spiritual experience which is the birthright of every man. This experience may be gained by anyone who undergoes a certain discipline and puts forth an effort" (Radhakrishnan, 2009). This in short, is the essence of the Hindu Dharma, where none is discriminated in one's effort to seek the knowledge of the Absolute or an illumined personal experience of the Supreme. It teaches man to get rid of religious antagonisms, religious animosities which divide man from man, make them get back to the roots of reality. A true religious enlightenment gives comfort and also emphasize service to man. This is the very essence of the growing nationalist consciousness of the then period.

In a similar tone, Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, the otherwise "Forgotten Brahmin" (Sudipta Kaviraj, 2010), in his magnum opus *Samajik Prabandha / Essay On Society*, published in 1895, recognized the contributions of the other religious denominations that according to him helped in building up of national consciousness or Jatiyobhab. For instance, at one point though he never forgets the crisis of subjugation his revered Hindu Samaj has been going through since ages, he also admits that faced with plurality of language, cultural practices and ethnic groups all over the country, there was only one common factor in uniting India and establishing its claim of a long past – Hindu philosophy, religion and tradition. It was therefore very necessary for him to establish that despite all linguistic, ethnic and socio-cultural differences there was one common uniting factor in India since time immemorial – the Hindu religion. It was also an imperative to prove that its 'history' is as 'authentic' as that of the European's claim about the Greek and Roman history.

Thus, despite criticized for being a conservative Hindu, Bhudev was a modern pragmatic man, who never moved away from his task of developing Jatiyobhab under some emotional and impractical thought process. Bhudev's support towards restrictions in commensality could be a case in point. When asked by a European friend that why Bhudev would not dine with him, he gave an apologetic answer that is perhaps the key note in understanding his orthodox stand: "Dining with you would be an act in violation of our social code. Could there be a stronger reason [for declining your invitation]? Besides consider what else we are left with? We have lost our political freedom, our religion is under your attack, our vernacular literature has not reached a level one can be proud of. What else have we got to give us a sense of pride or help maintain our individuality [as a people]? You may call it superstition or a social code; the system of castes and codes of ritual conduct are all that we have now-these I cannot abandon" (Mukhopadhyay cited in Raychaudhuri, 1988). As transparent to any reader Bhudev's "orthodoxy in these matters had strong nationalist overtones, and with good reason" (Raychaudhuri, 1988).

Swami Vivekananda, the revolutionary Hindu revivalist of the period, on the other hand, took up the nationalist project after Bhudev and Bankim. Faced by the challenges of Western idea of modernization, he came forward to defend the native community by presenting a polycentric vision of a world of distinct and equal nations, in which the native Hindu culture has played in the past and will in the future play an active role. Vivekananda proposed to the world an authentic India, a dynamic Aryan civilization that had been in touch with other world centres of learning (Persia and Greece) and that rejected any inherent barriers

between the sexes, castes, and between religious and secular branches of knowledge. He attacked the religious taboos on contacts with aliens and the caste laws prescribed by the Brahmin priests as a form of degeneration of this otherwise democratic civilization. He sincerely believed, that to learn from foreign cultures entailed no break with Indian tradition. On the contrary, it was merely a way of recovering skills and knowledge which was once in Indian possession. For Vivekananda, the nation is a spontaneous solidarity that from its foundations is continuously evolving through cycles of achievement and decline.

Swami Vivekananda's phenomenal presence in the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 had created a much needed and unprecedented stir throughout the nation, which he accumulated together with his own charisma to give rise to a collective identity breaking all the limitations. He specifically focused on reviving the cultural past which he was sure will be playing a major role in the future as well. Vivekananda as the champion of Vedanta philosophy had created a high degree of interest in himself and his work in the world forum, which is of great significance since prior to him, none with such profound and insightful knowledge had presented the Hindu thought in a foreign land with such creativity and clarity. His position was more than that of the role of an intelligentsia, for unlike them he didn't become a wholesome 'modernist' by becoming an admirer of the West despising every native thing, neither was he a 'traditionalist' who denied all value to the foreign.

The Vedanta, in this regard, was an inseparable part of Swami Vivekananda's personality and was the constitutive element of his conception of the nation. He lived and breathed this philosophy while preaching it to India and the West. To quote Vivekananda, "The Hindus found their creed upon the ancient Vedas, a word derived from Vid, 'to know'" (Vivekananda, 2012).

Swami Vivekananda's ideals were not simply to spread Hindu thought in the Western land full of strangers or to search for his own enquiries. He was also to establish his claim to India's nationhood based on its antiquity. The main artefact that he used was our Vedantic tradition which he modified for his resurrection of the Indian past and reawakening of the national pride. He made his firm declaration at the Parliament about non-dogmatism and openness of Hinduism in the following words: "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true" (Vivekananda, 2012).

While pursuing this approach, nowhere, does Vivekananda seeks to preach a dogmatic religion like those of the Abrahamic ones, neither he fails to spread the message of 'assimilation' between the East and West by identifying the superiority of each in their respective fields to get closer to the ultimate truth of 'Oneness' and 'Unity'. Thus, we could very well feel the essence of what Vivekananda started as the philosophy of religion, gradually evolved into such a spiritual tradition which consisted of both modern and missionary, even scientific, traits to get itself adjusted to the contemporary world dominated by Western knowledge, power and culture. It was going to be the main axis of India's nationhood.

## CONCLUSION:

From the above discussion, it could thus be said that, facing the indomitable challenge of the Western ideas of 'political sovereignty' and the supremacy of the 'state system', these stalwarts upheld the idea of their 'nationhood construction' on the basis of the 'Hindu culture' and 'spiritual sovereignty' with unfaltering determination and integrity.

No doubt, that together with language, ethnicity, common blood or 'volk', the Sanatan Hindu Dharma, in the nineteenth century played a significant role in the development of proto-nationalism, where the consciousness of common people believes in the auld lang syne, to possess a "state" of their own. Thus, to quote Swamiji, "the Hindu says that political and social independence are well and good, but the real thing is 'spiritual independence' – Mukti. This is our "national purpose" (Vivekananda, 2005).

Amidst such developments, the concept of 'historical nation' became very popular in the late nineteenth century discourse. As regards the idea of 'historical nation', Hobsbawm himself admits that "Nevertheless, in one way or another membership of a historic (or actual) state present or past, can act directly upon the consciousness of the common people to produce proto-nationalism or perhaps even, as in case of Tudor England, something close to modern patriotism" (Hobsbawm, 1992).

For the nineteenth century nationalists elites, engaged in constructing a territorial state for 'their' nation, a claim to an 'ancient state' belonging specifically to that nation, 'once upon a time or since long past' was both a political necessity and a convenient tool to mobilize the masses. No doubt it provoked strong emotional sentiments so necessary for national bonding. This 'nostalgia', as John Armstrong demonstrated in his work, *Nations before nationalism*, "promoted strong nationalist bonding" (1982). But this has led some nationalist movements "to reach far back beyond the real memory of their peoples in the search for a suitable (and suitably impressive) national state in the past" (Hobsbawm, 1992).

It will not be out of place to quote Ernest Renan – one of the popular French Orientalist – in this regard. According to Renan, "the cultural/ethnic symbols,

memories, myths, language, and all that people believe to have carried since antiquity – rich legacy of remembrances” (Renan, 1882), often arouses in them the passionate psychological yearnings and the actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to continue to value the heritage which all hold in common. This phenomenon has been appropriately identified by Raychaudhuri as “an element of social neurosis in the late nineteenth century preoccupation with Hindu glory among a large section of the Bengali intelligentsia” (Raychaudhuri, 1988) – one of the chief characteristics of the era.

It could be said from the above exploration of the sincere efforts of the then intelligentsias that their ideas still hold significant implication for our current ongoing efforts toward nationhood construction – the foundational basis of which they have undeniably premised upon the Sanatan Hindu Dharma and the ancient Indian Vedic past. However, the uniqueness of the model is that despite being rooted in the religion practiced by the majority since the Vedic Age, it does not instigate any hatred toward other religious denomination, nor it projects any idea of xenophobia to be practiced at the cost of other ethnic identities. Undoubtedly, the grand project of the stalwarts of the then era was an inclusionary one, from the perspective of the synthesis of the East and the West as well as the synthesis of the internal pluralities, which will be of great importance for formulating our future notions of Indian nationhood construction.

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